

The Declining Effectiveness of the Canadian Warning Labels on Cigarette Packs: Findings from the International Tobacco Control (ITC) Canada Survey, 2002–2008

Geoffrey T. Fong 1,2 Christine Logel1, Sara C. Hitchman1, David Hammond3, and Pete Driezen4

¹Department of Psychology, University of Waterloo, Waterloo, ²Ontario Institute for Cancer Research ³Department of Health Studies and Gerontology, University of Waterloo, ⁴Propel Centre for Population Health Impact, University of Waterloo

BACKGROUND

• In December 2000, Canada became the first country to introduce pictorial health warning labels on tobacco products. However, over the last decade, the Canadian labels have remained unchanged, leaving them vulnerable to the well-documented effects of wearout—the declining impact of the same message over time.

OBJECTIVE

■ To examine how the effectiveness of the Canadian warnings has changed over time (from 2002 to 2008).

SURVEY

• A nationally representative sample of 5,107 Canadian adult current smokers from Waves 1–7 (2002–08) of the ITC Canada Survey (part of the 20-country ITC Project), a longitudinal cohort random digit-dialed telephone survey. The sample includes all respondents who participated in one wave and those who participated in more than one wave.

MEASURES

- Seven key indicators of warning label effectiveness
 were examined over seven years: naming the pack
 as a source of information about the harms of
 smoking, noticing the warnings, looking closely at the
 warnings, indicating that the warnings lead to
 thoughts about the health risks of smoking, indicating
 that the warnings lead to thoughts about quitting,
 avoiding the warning labels (a slightly different
 wording was used in Waves 6 and 7 compared to
 Waves 1-5, and forgoing a cigarette because of the
 warnings.
- Labels Impact Index: a composite measure of warning labels effectiveness was created by combining the noticing, risk, quitting, and forgoing a cigarette measures (standardizing first before combining the measures into the index. The standardized scores were then use to create a Label Impact Index (LII), weighted by the importance of the measure in the assessment of the overall effectiveness of warning labels in the following way:

LII = (1 * notice) + (2 * risk) + (2 * quit) + (3 * forgo).

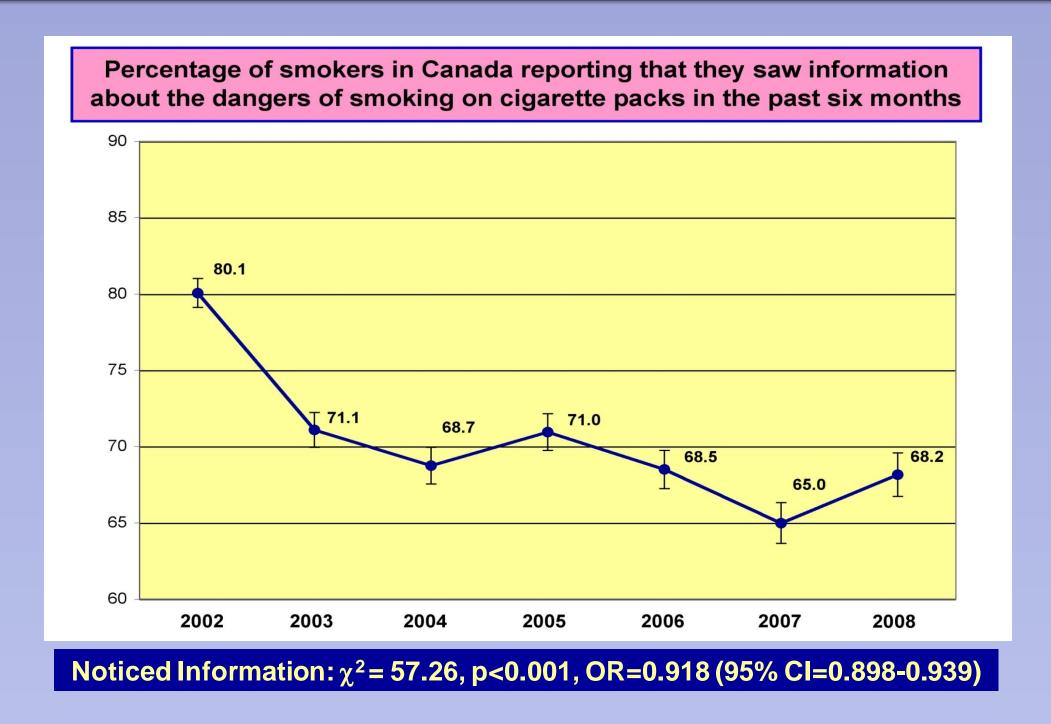
Measures included in the LII have been previously shown to prospectively predict quit attempts.

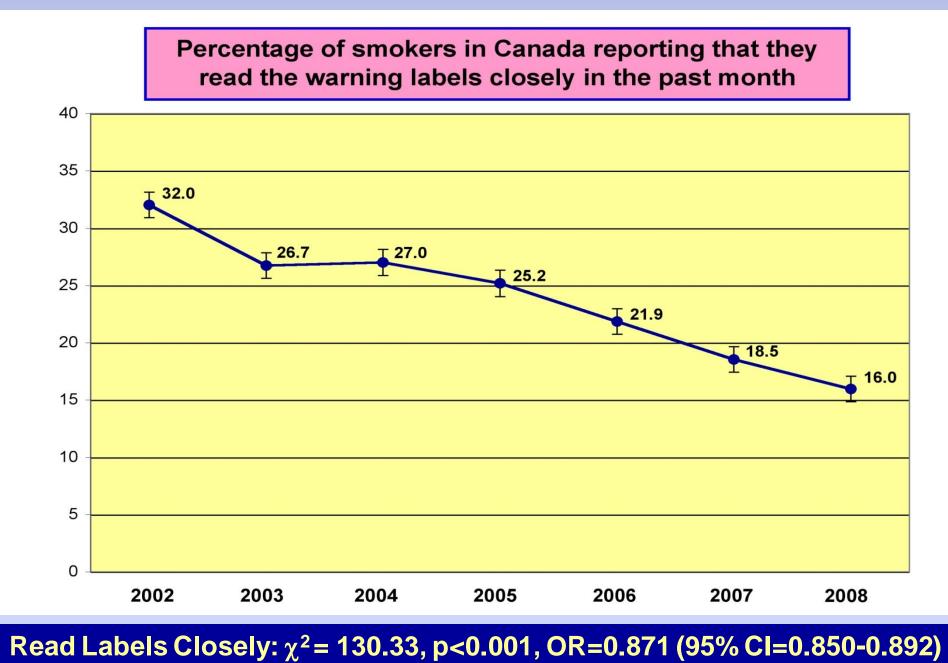
ANALYSES

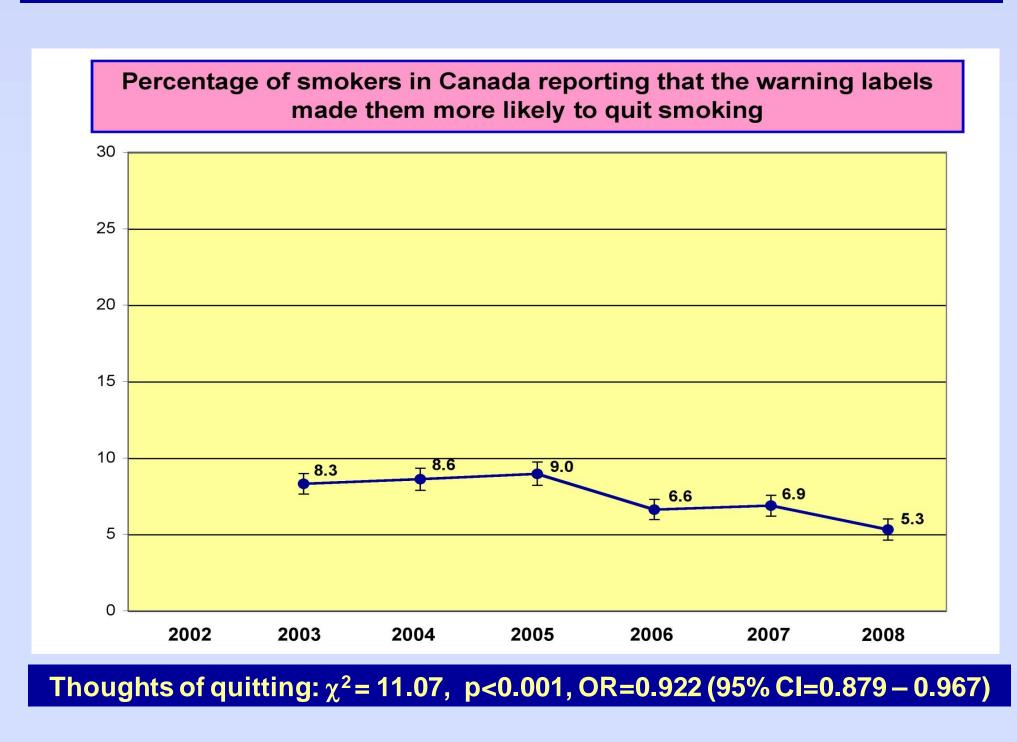
- Separate logistic regression models were estimated using generalized estimating equations (GEE) for binary outcomes to test: (1) whether there was a linear decline in smokers' perceptions over time; and (2) whether smokers' perceptions at Wave 7 differed significantly from smokers' perceptions at Wave 1 (linear statistics shown below each figure). A similar approach was used to test changes in the LII over time, using linear GEE regression models. All analyses were weighted.
- Models controlled for: sex, age, ethnicity, income, and education, daily vs. non-daily smoking, amount smoked per day, time to first cigarette of the day, and intentions to quit smoking.

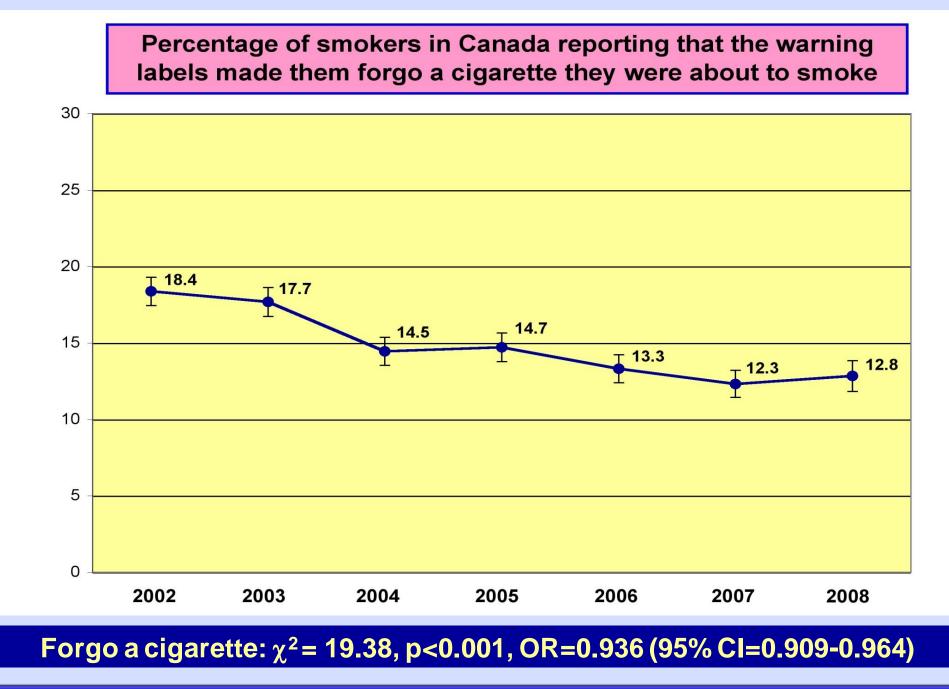
RESULTS

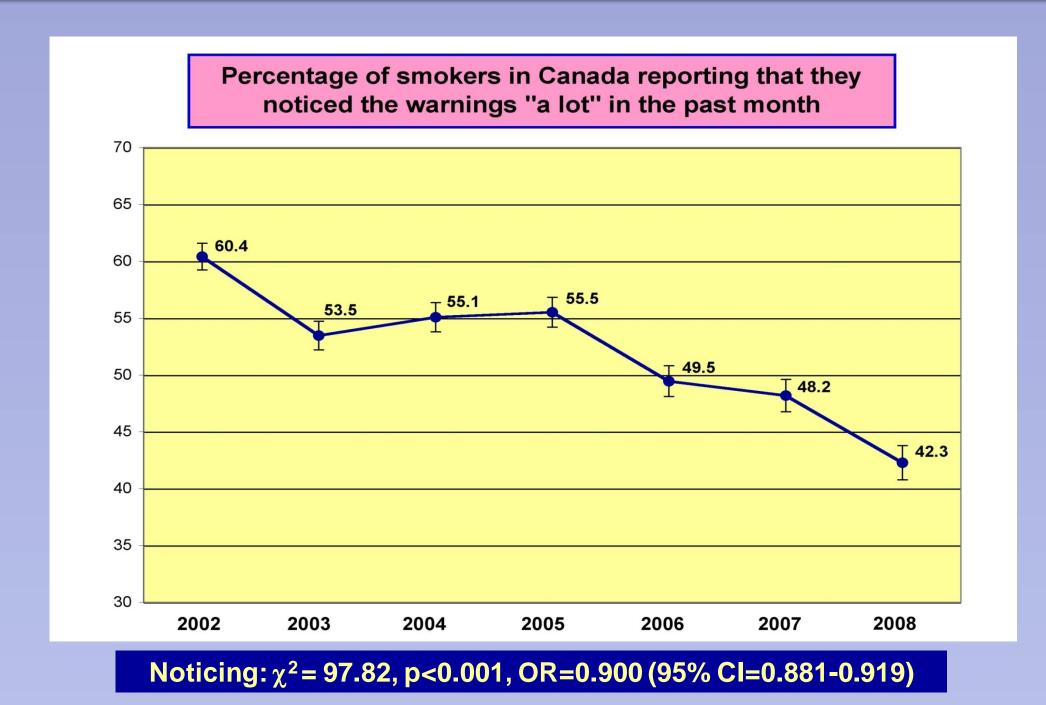
All of the indicators of label effectiveness declined and overall Labels Impact Index declined over the seven year period, demonstrating wear-out of the Canadian labels. The test statistics below the figures are for linear trend.

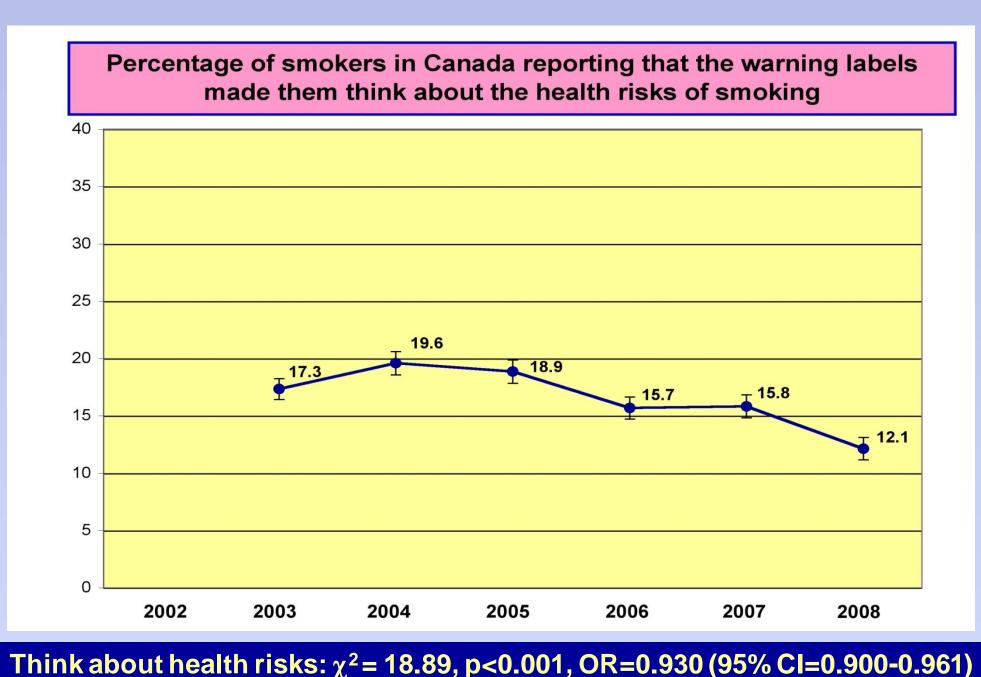


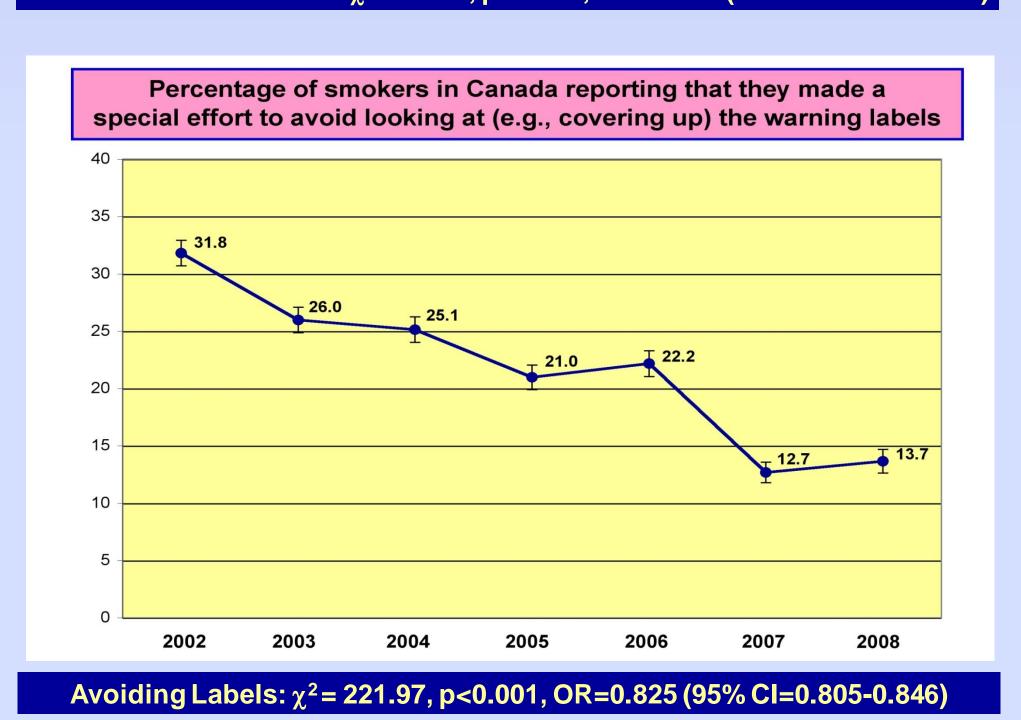


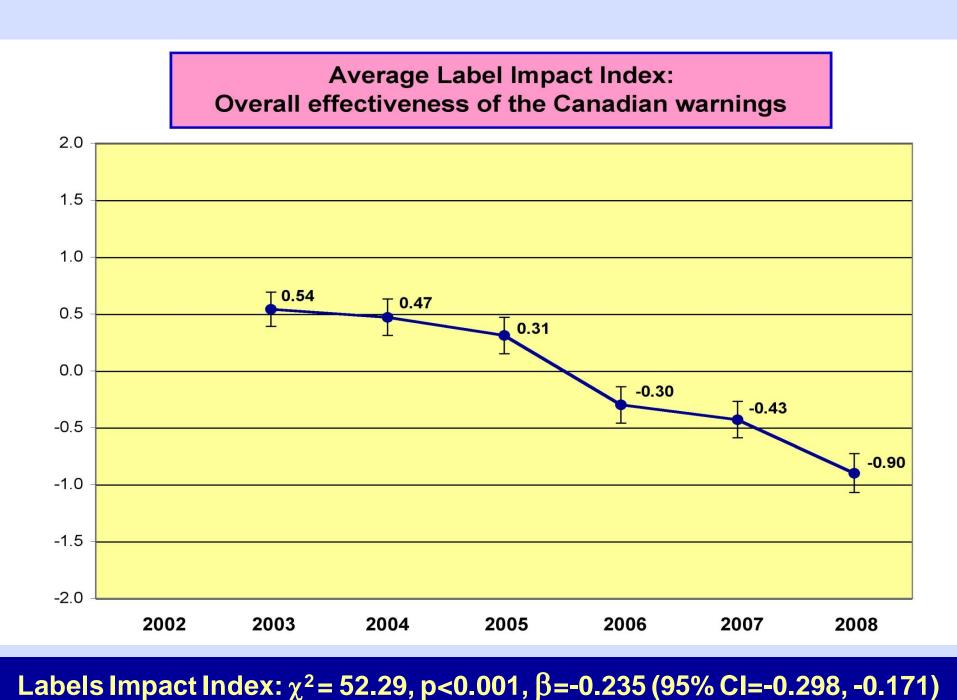












CONCLUSION: The ITC Canada Survey demonstrates that label effectiveness declined significantly from 2002 to 2008 in Canada. These findings support the FCTC Article 11 Guidelines obligating the 172 FCTC Parties to revise their warning labels in a timely fashion. As the U.S. introduces graphic warnings in 2012, the FDA should begin the revision process in the near future to avoid the label wear-out experienced in Canada.

ITC Project Research Organizations



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